



Media Fact Sheet

The International Year for Small Island Developing States

Key Messages

- Home to 62.3 million people, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are custodians of 30% of the world's 50 largest economic zones, and play an important role in protecting the oceans.
- Renewed and sustained action is needed by the international community to adequately address the high vulnerability of natural, economic and social systems in SIDS.
- From economic growth to climate change and food security, the issues facing SIDS are multi-dimensional and require integrated action to address them.
- The Green Economy offers opportunities for SIDS to better manage natural capital, protect the environment, create green jobs and achieve sustainable development.
- UNEP is strongly committed to supporting SIDS within its relevant areas of expertise.

Climate Change Vulnerability

SIDS are especially vulnerable to climate change due to their small size, narrow resource base, high susceptibility to natural hazards, low economic resilience, and limited human and technological capacity for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.

SIDS contribute little to the problem of climate change: the combined annual carbon dioxide output of SIDS accounts for less than one per cent of global emissions.

Climate change adaptation has been identified as a top priority for SIDS but lack of financial resources is an obstacle. The capital cost of Sea Level Rise in the Caribbean Community Countries alone is estimated at US \$187 billion by 2080 under a business as usual scenario.

Research shows that by 2100, global warming could lead to a sea-level rise of up to two metres, making many SIDS, including the Maldives, Kiribati and Tuvalu uninhabitable.



Sustainable Energy Challenges and Opportunities

Sustainable development in SIDS has to be built on a sustainable energy foundation.

Energy dependence is a major source of vulnerability for many SIDS that have little or no access to modern and affordable energy sources.

Energy prices in the vast majority of SIDS are among the highest globally. In some cases electricity cost is 500 per cent more than in the US, primarily as a result of the dependence on imported petroleum fuels.

Power generation in SIDS consumes in excess of 50 million barrels of petroleum annually, which provides over 90 per cent of primary energy.

Improving the SIDS power sector requires that fossil fuel dependence is cut by half by 2035 in favour of renewable energy sources (ocean, geothermal, solar, wind and biofuels).

Caribbean Community Countries estimate the shift could cost tens of billions of US dollars.

Despite international support for implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy, there is currently no mechanism that is in place to help SIDS transform their energy sector.

Small Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture

Fisheries play a significant role in the economy, livelihoods and food security of SIDS, which hold jurisdiction over coastal waters and open seas that are many times larger than their land mass.

Fisheries-generated GDP in some SIDS is estimated at up to 12 per cent of total GDP.

Aggregate capture fisheries play a major role in many national economies, especially in the Pacific SIDS, where capture fisheries can contribute as much as 10 per cent of GDP.

Fish consumption in the Pacific SIDS accounts for 50-90 per cent of animal protein in the diet of coastal communities, while national fish consumption can be as much as 3 to 4 times higher than the global average per capita.

The effects of climate change on SIDS are anticipated to indirectly affect fisheries, as changing water temperature impacts negatively on coral reefs and mangroves that function as nurseries, habitats and foraging grounds for fish. Also associated with changing weather patterns, are shifts in migratory patterns of fish species, affecting their availability during different periods of the year.

Threats to fisheries in SIDS include: pollution, habitat loss and alteration, destructive harvesting methods, overexploitation, invasive alien species, oceanic acidification, natural disasters and climate change.

Amid those challenges, the fisheries sector is expected to meet the demands of a growing population and increasing requirements for fish protein.



A Green Economy fishery sector is one that is ecologically sustainable, provides a higher level of economic goods and services at lower environmental costs, and equitably distributes those benefits.

Greening the Tourism Sector

Tourism is a vital sector of the economies of most SIDS. For more than half of SIDS, it is their largest source of foreign exchange. Tourism receipts represent more than 30% of their total exports; in comparison, the average for the world is just over 5%, according to World Bank estimates.

Climate change presents one of the most significant challenges to the sector, disrupting economies and livelihoods. For example, a 50-centimeter rise in sea level will result in Grenada losing 60% of its beaches, while a one metre rise would inundate the Maldives.

Climate change may cause coral bleaching to become an annual occurrence causing further losses in revenue. Dominica has reported that 50 per cent of its corals are bleached, and coral bleaching in Tobago affected an average of 66 per cent of its hard corals in 2005 alone.

The tourism industry should be one of the lead industries in the promotion of green initiatives, being both an industry dependent on natural resources and a major contributor to employment and economic growth. Greening tourism requires a shift across the entire industry pertaining to the implementation of policies, practices and programmes that embrace sustainability.

Focus on Selected UNEP Activities

UNEP – UNDESA Foresight Process for SIDS

UNEP recently launched a unique new Foresight Process to identify and prioritise global emerging environmental and sustainability issues from the perspective of the SIDS. The process will provide a significant new avenue for incorporating the viewpoints of the SIDS in global sustainability policymaking.

The output of the process will also inform the UN community, policymakers and other stakeholders in general about critical emerging sustainability issues that require immediate and/or adequate attention.

Regional Seas Programme

UNEP's Regional Seas Programme, which celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year, provides an important globally coordinated, region-wide mechanism to implement all relevant global environmental conventions and agreements. SIDS mainly dominate two regions; the Wider Caribbean and the South Pacific, but all SIDS are part of a Regional Seas Programme.



Valuation and Accounting of Ecosystem Services for SIDS

Economic valuation of environmental capital and social equity underpins the capacity of policymakers (particularly those in Ministries of Finance and Planning) to make balanced policy choices in pursuit of sustainable development.

UNEP is working with partners to produce a Guidance Manual on Valuation and Accounting of Ecosystem Services for Small Island Developing States that aims to develop the capacity of governments to integrate economic valuations of environmental capital into sustainable development planning and implementation.

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